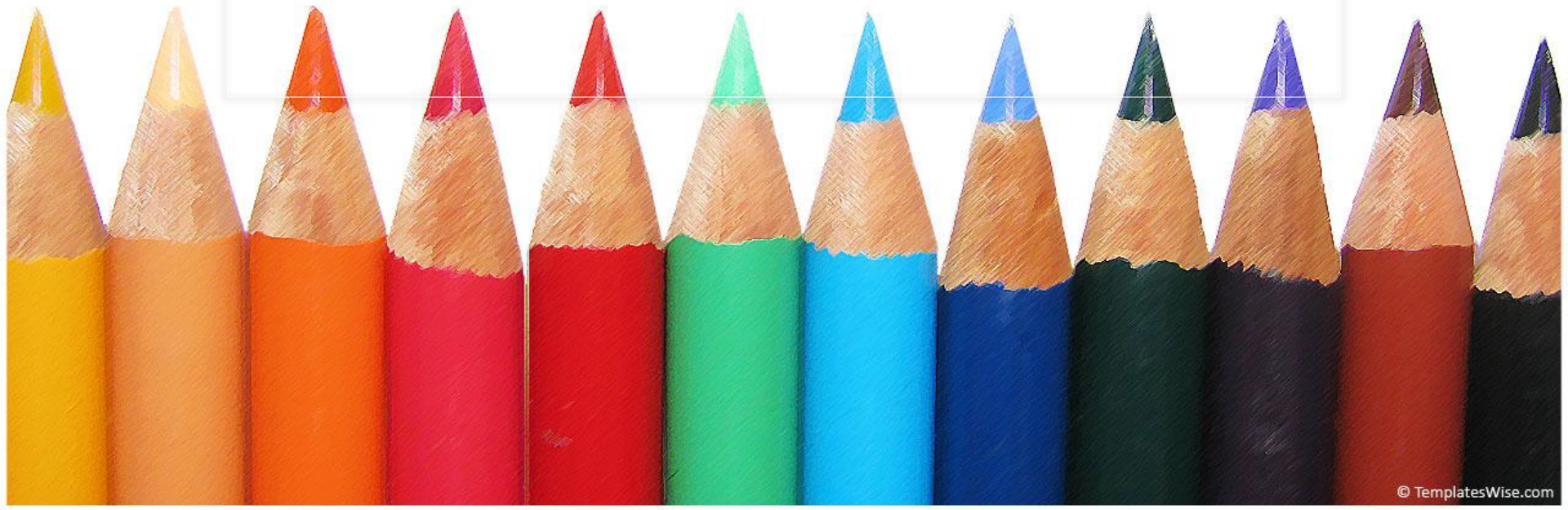


Student Success Stories from the Field

Shereen Tabrizi & Local Colleagues



Special Populations

- Despite the challenges our students face, there are many heroes in the field (students, parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, liaisons, recruiters, administrators, bus drivers, etc.) who model resiliency, contribute and collaborate toward each student's success.
- The following are only a few sample success stories we have gathered.
- I am inviting representatives from local districts and intermediate school districts to briefly tell their stories.

Beth McCullough, Adrian Public Schools

A Boy and a Book



A boy and a book

He put his hand on the book and looked at me. I smiled at him. “You can certainly have a book if your Mom says it ok.” I looked around the room full of 100+ people. No one seemed to be in charge of him at the moment. It was a little chaotic and the noise made it worse. Every sound echoed around the walls of the cinder block building. In fact I was hoarse afterward because I had to yell to be heard by someone just two feet away. He looked around for his mom, not taking his hand off the book. I had 90 books on my table but that one was apparently important to him. He didn’t see her. It wasn’t a dangerous place for a young boy of probably 7 years of age. It was a yearly event where over 50 agencies serving homeless individuals come together for “Project Connect.” People can talk to workers from agencies instead of leaving messages. A person can walk across the room to an agency s/he is referred to rather than making an appointment for a week away.

A boy and a book

Another family came up to my table and asked if I could help them. I looked at the little boy and said “Hold on a minute. I want to find your mom. You can take the book but stay right here.” The new family pulled up chairs. “The last bus driver did it this way...” they told me. I had difficulty talking to the bus garage because of the roar in the room. I told the parent that the bus garage or I would get back to her later that afternoon.

The little boy remained, with his new book opened. It was a coloring book and each page had a different letter with a picture and large lines to practice writing that letter. He was tracing the letter over and over with his finger. “Nathan, get over here,” said a woman with two more children with her. The little boy got up, took his book and went to the woman. “Stay here while I talk to this counseling place,” she said. “Here” was a table set up for filling out paperwork

A boy and a book

He sat down on the floor, under the table. He opened his book slowly, finding the page he had been working on. With his pointer finger acting as his pen, he started tracing the letters again. His action was very precise. His slowness was such a contrast to the busyness of the room. Did he even hear the din around him? Another family stepped up to my table to ask what my program might be able to do for them. There was a panic in this mother's voice. She told me quickly what tables she had been to and what they told her and how she could make this happen and apologized for sounding so crazy and reassured me she wasn't really crazy just overwhelmed. I asked her to sit down and she did for a moment but then stood up as she told more of her story.

A boy and a book

I answered each question and gave her information and a pamphlet with the same information on it. She looked at her phone and told me her ride was coming soon so she would call me. She hurried off, picking up her scarf that dragged on the floor only to drop a glove. Nathan sat there, unmoved from where his mother had put him. He didn't look around for his mother. He traced letters with the concentration of a surgeon. As I watched him it seemed the noise of the room fell away. Focusing on his focus made the world quieter. The room full of people seemed to slow and fade away. It was a peaceful moment amongst the backdrop of chaos. "They told me to talk to you about my kids going to school," said a woman in front of my table. I looked up at her and the noise of the room came flooding back.

A boy and a book

I assisted her, yelling over the noise the whole time. When she walked away, I looked over to where Nathan had been sitting. He was gone. I scanned the room and saw him leaving with his mother. She never stopped to talk to me. Maybe she didn't need anything from me. His coat was unzipped. His hat was too big and he tilted his head back, trying to look out from under it. He clutched his book to his chest. Of all the people I talked to in those four hours, the one I remember most is the one who didn't talk at all. So I will say it for him: "Thank you for the book."

Michigan Friends of Education donated the books free of cost and does the same for programs all over the state everyday.

**There is a brilliant child locked
inside every student.**

- Marva Collins

Laura Coulter, Utica Public Schools

Born to lead



Born to Lead

From the moment I saw him, I knew he was born to lead. There stood a five year old boy, with a head full of dark brown hair and wide, brown eyes to match, translating official school business in our elementary office for his non-English speaking father. A man who looked to have been born in my father's decade, with mobility challenges, and a child who needed to be enrolled in school, stood peering down with loving, anxious eyes at this boy who represented the future of his family... every last branch of their tree. My new student was born in a war torn country where his family was being persecuted for their religious beliefs. Four and half years later this child found himself stepping off a plane from Iraq and onto U.S. soil, where he would have to navigate what may as well have been a whole new world. He was about to become the man of the family, as so often happens to these refugee students once they begin their education in our public schools. With an authentic will to survive and a happy tenacity to learn, we welcome these beautiful children into our classrooms every single day.

Born to lead

A neighboring district had started my student off on the right foot when he entered kindergarten, but when I came across him in our office the spring of that school year, he still had a lot of letters and numbers to learn, and was just beginning to be comfortable with some academic language. Thanks to his new speaking and listening skills, this student was already moving up a level on his English proficiency test. First grade was on the horizon and full of promise. This child struggled with the transition, as so many English Learners do. There was so much English! but he was a fighter who was not about to be left behind! He did the best he could while in school, but once the final bell rang every day, his world converted back into Chaldean, his first culture.

Naturally, this can cause the academic growth of an EL to be slower than an American-born student. At home there is no one to read to English to him, quiz him in spelling, help him with writing, or even decipher school notes regarding serious homework matters or fun extracurricular events.

Born to lead

Thanks to our treasured, Chaldean-speaking teacher, this child's parent finally felt comfortable enough, in such a foreign setting as our public school's first grade classroom, to tell us more about his son, or rather his brother's son. You see, this child was given up for adoption to his aunt and uncle who were unable to have children of their own, but were about to be blessed with an opportunity to enter the U.S and have a safe and successful life. His teacher agreed to send his portfolio back to Iraq, where his birth parents would undoubtedly pour over the mysterious English letters in his journal and marvel at his ever increasing artistic abilities in his treasured first grade illustrations. This child is aware of his unique family dynamics, one that leaves this 'only child' with a brother on the other side of the globe. But every day he enters school ready to learn, fit in, and surpass everyone's expectations of him.

Born to lead

Now, he can read, write, listen, and speak in his second language. He is leading people outside his family too. When a student comes without any English, he translates for them... and me! He makes sure they have an understanding of how to accomplish new things in the classroom and how to make new friends. I have no doubt that this now seven year old, will continue to make his way in this world and make it a better place along the way. It is my honor to be entrusted with his education, and the education of all other EL's every day.

The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires.

- William Arthur Ward

Deborah Szeman, Wayne County RESA

Mothers Count!

Learning English in context

Loves to share!

During summer school, a little child has his pizza in front of him and asks for a second piece. The teacher says 'of course he can have another, but doesn't he want to finish the one he hasn't touched yet?'

The child says, "No I want to take it home to my mom."

He got the second piece!!

Learning English

Fourth of July Celebration at Henry Ford and Greenfield Village.

The school that serves young English learners had 100 families show up for the annual fireworks and Detroit Symphony Orchestra performance.

The school staff received thank you cards from the children that attended.

One little boy from Vietnam wrote: "...we had so much fun. We sang all the songs, even though we did not know the words...".

Geer Park- Dearborn Public Schools

A English learner student is beating the odds through multi-tier support and initiatives in all levels of the pyramid of intervention. He started at Geer Park in November 2011 of his kindergarten year. He was a shy boy with limited oral language proficiency. He was a child that could easily slip through the cracks because of his quiet nature. After 2 ½ of support from teachers, resource teacher, instructional coach, extended day tutoring, paraprofessionals, and along with parent support , the student has changed from an at risk learner to a student who actively participates in second grade and reads above grade level!!

Sara Rainwater, Genesee Intermediate School District

Successes of a Newcomer student



The Newcomer

Abdul is a 7 year old newcomer who came in the fall, 2013 to the US from an area in Syria that had been bombarded with war. A few weeks into school, out of nowhere, Abdul burst into tears. Our bilingual staff member, who works with him daily but who was not in the room at the time, was promptly “summoned” from another classroom to see what was going on; Abdul’s classroom teacher did not speak Arabic. Our bilingual staff member was cautious – not knowing what our little guy needed or was going through and knowing all that he had already been through. By the time she walked to his room, Abdul had stopped crying. “Why were you crying? Is everything alright?” she asked.

The Newcomer

Seconds later, Abdul was smiling and now our staff member was on the verge of tears. In the language he knew, Abdul had shared: “I thought I couldn’t survive school and thinking about it made me cry. But with you there to help me, I know I can do it!” As the year progressed, not only had he been touched to hear his own language, his own dialect, but he proved to be extremely bright with a desire to be challenged and the gift to learn content and English rapidly. We are thankful to our staff who love their students and who give students opportunities (including those only possible in their own words), encouragement and supports to recognize their potential regardless of their English proficiency.

All human beings are born with unique gifts. The healthy functioning of our community depends on its capacity to develop each gift.

- Peter Senge
'The Learning School'

Srey Meyer, Grand Rapids Public Schools

Collaboration



Collaboration

A three year old boy, Saul, came to us at the beginning of the year while we were administering the Brigance Test, a routine assessment to start Pre-K. Saul knew no English as he comes from a home that is Spanish speaking. The first question I asked was, “What is your name?” He yelled at his mom who was on the other side of the room MAMA, because he did not understand me. Saul cried the first two days of school all day as he was terrified to start school. We made every possible adjustment for him to be successful. Saul adjusted slowly to our routine and communication with me was very difficult because of the language barrier.

Collaboration

Saul has made tremendous progress and is speaking and understanding English, is able to communicate with the staff and the other students. Saul is always happy, is able to write his name, he knows all letters and sounds, as well as numbers and shapes. Saul has shown growth in all the early childhood domains, as our program is driven by the development of the whole child. Saul was able to grow and develop with great success as an English Learner. He has a very supporting and loving family that is very involved in our program activities. Mom has expressed her appreciation s several times for helping Saul be ready for kindergarten. My paraprofessionals and I are very confident that Saul is ready for kindergarten and will show great success as he has done in our program this year.

Education,
in the broadest of truest sense,
will make an individual seek
to help all people,
regardless of race,
regardless of color,
regardless of condition.

- George Washington Carver

Michelle Mattson, Hart Public Schools

Overcoming Poverty



Overcoming Poverty

Last year, a migrant family came to our area as they typically do. Their second to youngest daughter was in kindergarten and we noticed that she was having trouble reading. Through a series of assessments and interviews with the family and teachers we discovered that Selena was having trouble seeing. The migrant program arranged to take Selena to the eye doctor where we found out that she was very much in need of glasses. The migrant teacher helped her pick out some frames, and glasses were ordered. Because of the migrant program, Selena now proudly wears her glasses daily. She has more confidence and is doing very well in school. Her parents are very grateful that the migrant program was able to help their daughter get the glasses she so desperately needed.

Tonda Boothby, Van Buren ISD

Supporting the Whole Child



Supporting the Whole Child

We have a youngster that we are in the process of helping. He is 4 years old and has a younger brother. Mom lives just outside of town in a trailer park with both little boys. The children qualified for migrant program services when mom moved to town to work in a nursery. The four year old is having a very difficult time playing with other children in his preschool program. He has difficulty relating and has caused problems on the bus resulting in a bus suspension. Mom has visits from Family Links staff who is working with the youngest son. Our migrant program teacher has helped the mom attend meetings at the school and translates for her at school. The migrant teacher has also provided academic support to the four year old when he was in school.

Supporting the whole Child

He is suspended from riding the district bus and his mother does not have her own transportation. The preschool program does not want him to attend without a viable way to get home if he misbehaves in school. He cannot ride the special education bus because he does not qualify for that program. Our migrant program is teaming with the special education supervisor, GSRP co-director, and Family Links representative to find ways to get him to school and to find a way to get him home if he misbehaves. We are fortunate to have staff members who are willing to address what is in the best interest of the child and creative in figuring out how to achieve this.

The end of all education
should surely be service to others.

We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and
forget about progress and
prosperity for our community.

Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the
aspirations and needs of others, for their sake and
for our own.

- Cesar Chavez

Liz Scott, Shelby Public Schools

Becoming a Good Reader



Becoming a Good Reader

This year has been a year to watch one of my migrant English Language learners grow and excel. He is in 2nd grade and began the year very quiet and reserved during class discussions for various reasons- limited English proficiency, lacking confidence with academic language and being new to our district. During our data review in March, the classroom teacher was celebrating the change in him. He has received direct instruction with our bilingual services and spent 45 minutes a day practicing language development lessons. The teacher was first excited to see him sharing in class and volunteering to read aloud, but then she looked at his reading scores and he had improved so much she was thrilled. He was given the DRA, a leveled assessment given one-on-one by the teacher, and he kept moving up in levels, up to 6 levels, and he said: "Teacher, I don't think there is a level in there that I can't read!"

Deb Nedo, Traverse City Bay Area

Ready for School!



Ready for School

This fall, Jorge entered GSRP and was struggling with severe behavior. The GSRP teacher and paraprofessional, the migrant ESL teacher, the migrant parent liaison, the school counselor, the school intervention specialist and his parents all collaborated to provide the best plan for Jorge. We continue to work together regularly and communicate with his parents weekly about his continued needs and successes. He is now a very happy four year old! His behavior concerns have diminished and he has become a strong class leader. Jorge is ready for kindergarten!

Every student can learn, just not on the same day, or in the same way.

- George Evans